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DEPT FOR D, AF A A/S CARTER, AF/SPG, AF/C, IO
NSC FOR MGAVIN AND CHUDSON
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU
DEPT PLS PASS USAID FOR AFR/SUDAN

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TAGS: [ASEC](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [SOCI](#) [AU](#) [UNSC](#) [SU](#)
SUBJECT: UN TRIES TO COME UP WITH A PLAN AS NGO EMERGENCY CONTINUES

REFS: A) KHARTOUM 313, B) KHARTOUM 311, C) KHARTOUM 306, KHARTOUM 299

¶1. (SBU) The crisis resulting from Sudan's March 4 decision to expel 13 major Western NGOs (and dissolve 3 Sudanese NGOs) continued on March 8 as regional players, western embassies, the UN, and the SPLM urged a reluctant and publicly defiant Bashir regime to relent. President Bashir denounced the expelled NGOS as "agents and spies" in a March 8 rally in El Fasher. While the initial "within 24 hours expulsion" order has now been stayed for four days and could be one or two weeks longer, the outlook for maintaining the same level of humanitarian services in the short run remains extremely difficult. The latest UN agreement with the GOS is an extremely fragile process with a very narrow window. This arrangement and UN measures to release food and fuel have bought some time, but not much.

¶2. (SBU) Numerous UN staff spent March 7 and March 8 feverishly preparing the "joint assessment" of the humanitarian gaps that will be created by the departure of the NGOs. UN Deputy SRSG for Humanitarian Affairs Ameerah Haqq will present the draft document to GOS Humanitarian Affairs Commissioner Hassabo the afternoon of March 8 to negotiate changes and then will meet with State Minister of Humanitarian Affairs (and ICC indictee) Ahmed Haroun the evening of March 8 to agree on the final text. The objective is to agree on which individuals and programs are critical and therefore should not be forced to leave by Monday, March (assuming they aren't being held in Sudan to extract the last penny from departing NGOs).

¶3. (SBU) Several individuals tasked with preparing the joint assessment reported that it is an impossible document to prepare, because virtually all of the required data from the NGOs was lost when HAC looted NGO computers on March 5 and 6 (Note: Despite repeated assurances of an end to harassment and intimidation, HAC continues to confiscate not only work computers, hard drives, and memory sticks, but also personal laptops, hard-drives, iPods, and anything that can store data. Numerous individuals from the NGOs were forced to perform a scan of their computers in front of HAC officials and if any suspect files were found the equipment was confiscated. End note).

¶4. (SBU) UNMIS political chief Muin Shreim told polchief that during SRSG Qazi's meeting with GOS Presidential Advisor Ghazi Salahudin March 7, Salahudin repeatedly insisted that if NGOs are merely "implementing partners" of donors and the UN, then Sudanese NGOs can easily replace the international NGOs being forced to leave - with technical guidance and expertise from the UN agencies. There is some concern within the UN that if the GOS sticks with this line of thinking and follows through with it, newly created GOS-supported NGOs may show up at WFP-run warehouses or JLC non-food item warehouses and insist on taking delivery of goods that normally would have been released to the NGOs being expelled - and do whatever they want with the items.

¶15. (SBU) UN contacts also reported that during his meeting with President Bashir the evening of March 7, Arab League SG Amr Mousa did not press Bashir at all on the question of the NGO expulsions. Mousa provided a readout of the meeting to UN SRSG Qazi immediately following the Bashir-Mousa meeting. Bashir reportedly told Mousa that the decision to expel the NGOs is irreversible, which Mousa didn't question but warned Bashir to ensure that the decision to expel the NGOs did not result in a humanitarian crisis in Darfur that would make the Sudanese Government look bad.

¶16. (SBU) Late on March 8, Deputy SRSG Ameera Haqq gave CDA Fernandez a relatively grim readout of the "progress made so far." She noted that there is an under-reporting of incidents of harassment and intimidation of NGOs (septel) because NGOs have been repeatedly warned that approaching the UN or foreign embassies will make their situation worse. She added that the GOS has agreed to "a case by case review of NGO work which could allow them to stay a few days longer" (she suggested up to 10 days to 2 weeks) so that there is no gap and a smooth handover of responsibilities.

¶17. (SBU) She emphasized that all senior government officials they have seen have confirmed that the expulsions are irreversible. The GOS continues to believe that the UN is painting too grim of a picture of the expulsions' consequences. The UN will ensure that some food distribution can be done through local food distribution committees and fuel can be supplied for water pumps "but these are stop gap measures." Ameera added that UNAMID troops have already had to protect food warehouses in Kaas and Mukjar from hoarders. In what she described as "buying time through the assessment process," UN agencies and HAC will send 4 technical teams in the fields of food,

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water, sanitation and health to Darfur's three states.

¶18. (SBU) Comment: Whatever the internal dynamics of this NCP decision - and it seems to have caught some senior regime officials by surprise - it has now taken a life of its own and the embattled President's embrace of the decision means that his minions have now embrace it no matter their private misgivings. The question is not whether this reckless decision can be reversed, but how the UN and donors can mitigate the danger to vulnerable populations. Given the essential nature of the regime and its current heightened state of hysteria because of the ICC, any solution will be messy. The regime has played one of its strongest cards - it knows that the massive and largely successful (until now) humanitarian operation in Darfur is exquisitely dependent on regime cooperation and knows that donors (including the US) have few good options available to them. It is betting that the West and the UN will, for the sake of highly vulnerable populations, be forced to engage and bend to the regime's more draconian rules to keep some sort of humanitarian operation (even one more subject to regime manipulation than ever before) going. Not only do they win a cheap propaganda victory, replace fractious NGOs with the more docile UN, and gain greater control over restless IDP camps, they may also make some money out of the game. End comment.

FERNANDEZ